

**MEETING SUMMARY
SR 520 BRIDGE REPLACEMENT AND HOV PROJECT
TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
ST. DEMETRIOS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
JULY 8, 2003**

Welcome, Meeting Objectives

Les Rubstello, WSDOT, opened the meeting by welcoming the technical committee and setting out the objectives for the afternoon. The purpose of the meeting was to provide a project update. Topics included a review of the project schedule and budget, environmental impact statement (EIS) alternatives and costs, tolling analysis, new traffic analysis, noise wall project, SR 520 and SR 202 status, and the upcoming water quality workshop. Les assured the committee that the project's funding would be sustained through completion of the draft EIS.

Maureen Sullivan, WSDOT, followed Les's introduction with an explanation of upcoming changes in the project leadership team. Les Rubstello will be moving to a new position within WSDOT, but will continue to coordinate with the project team throughout the planning process. The project's leadership has been lean and therefore, in addition to hiring a new project manager, will be looking for a project engineer.

Project Update

Regarding project schedule and budget, Les stated that the project would receive \$11 million to complete the EIS for the 4-, 6-, and 8-lane alternatives. This money will also be used towards an investigation of I-5 improvements to accompany the 8-lane alternative. The inclusion of the 8-lane alternative in the EIS has been mandated by the legislature. The DEIS is scheduled to be released in mid-2005.

Regarding EIS alternatives and costs, Les announced that the 6-lane modified option has been removed from the list of alternatives. It will stay in the EIS as a construction phase of both the full 6-lane and 8-lane options. The first available money for construction of either alternative would be considered the 6-lane modified.

Les asked the committee, if they would like to discuss the Preliminary Preferred Alternatives (PPA). All three options will be treated as potential finalists in the EIS. Maureen would like to push the group to try to get a plan out ahead of schedule. The funding shortage last year has made a quickened time schedule more difficult.

Regarding the 8-lane alternative, Parametrix has begun an initial analysis. The analysis calls for a widening that moves I-5 congestion onto I-90, where it disappears. Spokane Street is a difficult place to add a lane; a better candidate is Michigan Street. A series of three meetings will address the technical issues involved with this task. The meetings will produce six alternatives which will be further analyzed then narrowed to one for the DEIS. Anyone interested in participating in the meetings should contact Les Rubstello.

Unlike other WSDOT projects, the SR 520 project does not have a traffic operations goal. The one caveat is that the traffic on I-5 cannot be negatively affected.

Regarding the tolling analysis, Maureen explained that tolling was being included in the analysis because it is part of the project's financing mechanism. It is very likely that the new facility will be tolled. Les added that the toll on SR 520 would try to match that on the Tacoma Narrows Bridge to maintain equity.

Les addressed the language in Washington law that states that the second bridge crossing the lake cannot be tolled. The bridge that stands today may not fit the definition of the second bridge. Maureen added that it was not her belief that getting around this law would be too difficult.

Regarding new traffic analysis, Les explained that changes in volume/delay functions over the past year have made previous traffic work obsolete. All of the numbers must be recalculated to include the impact of tolling. The Parsons-Brinckerhoff analysis will give an indication of a proper toll level, which will be applied to all three alternatives. Another analysis will gauge the effect of no toll.

Regarding the noise wall project, \$3.5 million was set-aside for the 2003-2005 biennium. WSDOT will hire a consultant for design and possibly construction administration. The project will be advertised in approximately one year, with construction to be complete by July 2005.

Regarding the status of SR 520 and SR 202 interchange, WSDOT will no longer be handling the West Lake Sammamish Parkway to SR 202 segment. The legislature funded the eastern segment as the SR 520 and SR 202 Interchange Stage 3 Project. The project has been assigned to the WSDOT Northwest Region office.

Les added that although the EIS from SR 520/SR 202 interchange would match that of the SR 520 project as a whole, the two would remain separate. The reason for the separation is that if the more complex/controversial SR 520 EIS were to get bogged down in court, the smaller project could still move forward.

Regarding the Cost Estimate Validation Process (CEVP) costs, which were generally lower than those from the previous year. Falling estimates were a result of reduction in risk and the elimination of the eastern segment (SR 520/SR 202 Stage 3) from the project.

Maureen commented that the construction of a new graving dock (the place where pontoons are assembled) in Port Angeles in conjunction with the Hood Canal Floating Bridge Project would concurrently lower the costs and time of production. The Department of Ecology now requires pontoons to be completed in the graving dock and floated directly into position on the lake. They do not want the pontoons floated and stored at a separate facility while being completed.

Comments/Questions:

- Ann Martin, King County Department of Transportation, requested clarification on the location of the 8-lane alternative.
- Jim Leonard, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), asked which project would include the I-405 interchange. *The full 6- and 8-lane alternatives include the interchange. The phase option, however, would not incorporate the I-405 interchange.*
- King Cushman, Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), expressed concern that the funding package would not mention the consensus on the 6-lane alternative that was achieved by the technical committee. The legislature's decision to add the 8-lane alternative to the EIS will cause the committee to appear indecisive. *There will be background information on this process in the EIS.*
- David Allen, City of Seattle, asked how the old 6-lane modified was related to the new 6-lane phase option. *The 6-lane modified had been a combination of different options. The purpose of the phase option was to assess the minimum structure and cost. A range of prices and permutations would be added to the established minimum, but the minimum would be able to stand-alone.*
- David Allen asked if the \$1.8 million project could stand alone. *Yes, and there would not be "ramps to nowhere."*
- Len Newstrum, Town of Yarrow Point, asked if the Points section was still up in the air.
- Terry Marpert, City of Redmond, asked if the SR 520 process mirrored that of the I-405 project that was programmatic and seemed to move along more quickly. It was his observation that, along with being a lot quicker, the I-405 project was always at the top of local ballots. SR 520 should be at the top of the ballot. *The SR 520 project is already very far along – and with the exception of I-5, the work has been done at the project level.*
- King Cushman commented that a programmatic approach was too vague for communities looking for real information and action. The SR 520 project would be hard to do without a whole corridor approach. The I-405 project has had success by working in increments. One cannot build only half of a bridge.
- Jim Leonard asked if the impact of the project on I-5 would be included in the EIS. *The probability of I-5 being dropped from the EIS is small.*
- King Cushman asked if the EIS would include the impact of improvements by Sound Transit. He added that it was awkward because it was a whole new direction.

- Ann Martin asked why analysis was focusing on south of SR 520 instead of north of SR 520. *There is one lane ramp to the south that is projected to be a future problem. North of SR 520, there isn't an acute need for additional capacity.*
- David Allen asked about the impact of weaves on the I-5 traffic. *The weaves have been eliminated in the project design, but that the problem still exists in the 8-lane alternative.*
- Len Newstrum asked whether the project team would be looking at tolling or managed lanes. *The analysis would have general-purpose lanes tolled and HOV lanes not tolled. In the 4-lane alternative, everyone would be tolled.*
- Ann Martin asked what assumptions were being made for tolling on I-90. *Tolling may be the I-5 solution for congestion in the 8-lane alternative. Previous studies projected a 20 percent diversion when tolls were in place.*
- Eric Chipps, Sound Transit, asked if tolls would be considered permanent. *The team is currently looking at 2030 as a horizon year. Tolls would still be in place at that point, but would be subject to modification.*
- David Allen asked if the purpose of the toll was to raise revenues or to manage traffic. *The tolls would be set at a level that would maximize overall utility.*
- King Cushman mentioned the dilemma caused by state laws that limit the extent of tolling. *The decision to toll or not to toll will have a great impact on traffic. The project team would make note of the current laws (which currently do not allow tolling on the bridge) in the EIS.*
- Jim Leonard asked if there were a toll plaza on the presentation slide. *Yes, the picture was taken in the 1960s. There would most likely not be a plaza on the new bridge. By the time the bridge is complete, technology will most likely have advanced to a level at which all tolling could be done electronically. However, the plaza will be in the EIS. Tolling will be in the EIS but so far we have not included a toll plaza in our plans or our impact analysis. At most we may provide some information about what the building of a plaza would mean but otherwise plazas are not part of our plan. Electronic fines would be another legal hurdle to overcome.*
- King Cushman asked where a toll plaza would go. *Although the project does not anticipate a need for a toll plaza, there are several possible location options. One alternative is Medina, which has worked in the past, another is the wetlands area that is available but could be damaged by a plaza, and a third option could be a floating toll plaza.*
- Ann Martin brought up the use of tolling revenue to fund other transportation projects.
- Ann Martin asked if work on the SR 520/SR 202 segment would be done in conjunction with a 6-lane alternative design. *WSDOT would actually be working with an 8-lane section. The first inclination of the team was to put in 8 lanes regardless of the outcome up the hill. However, that may create too much back up at the conversion point. The excess capacity created by the 8 lanes would probably end up being used for storage.*
- Ann Martin asked how the 8-lane alternative would affect the creek and Marymour Park. *The park would be unchanged and the creek could be moved*

- (unharmful) to accommodate the 8-lane expansion. The most challenging part of the process would involve the drainage of stormwater runoff from the freeway.*
- Bernard van de Kamp, City of Bellevue, asked whether the owner of the property in the aforementioned area would be receiving the comments of the technical committee. *Yes, the property owner would be provided with this information.*

Water Quality Workshop

The design for the west-end of the bridge is still being debated. The current structure is so close to the water that it blocks the light from entering – leaving fish and other sea-creatures at risk. Raising the bridge will help to alleviate the problem, but it may cause new water-flow problems. The project team is currently studying the pros and cons of lifting the bridge. They will hold a workshop to go over these issues on September 4, 2003. Anyone interested is welcome to join the workshop.

The project team should be able to make a decision on a preferred alternative around the time the DEIS is released. Once that decision is made, work on the design of the structure will begin. There is hope that the new bridge will be more of a landmark structure than its predecessor.

Comments/Questions:

- Ann Martin commented that the bridge looked like it was in the same place in both the before and after pictures. *The elevated bridge would stray a bit from the current location, but both would end in the same place.*
- Terry Marpert asked that the water quality workshop emphasize the importance of the wetlands.
- Kurt Buchanan, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, asked if Portage Bay would be included in the water quality workshop. He expressed interest in seeing historical maps that would show a visual footprint of the area. *WSDOT has several aerial photos dating back to 1960 that could help to establish a baseline for new developments.*

Next Steps

WSDOT is planning on having at least quarterly meetings with the technical committee. The next SR 520 Executive Committee meeting will be held July 15th. The next meeting of the Advisory Committee will be held on July 22nd. In addition to the Advisory Committee, four smaller community “sounding boards” will be formed– three on the west side and one on the east side.

Other comments received

Paul Carr, Puget Sound Clean Air Agency: We won't be attending today's meeting since there is nothing on the agenda specific to air quality. Our resources to participate in this process are very limited.

Please note that while we may not be able to attend every meeting we still have concerns that should be addressed. We have addressed these in the past and will continue to address them at future meetings, but I want to reiterate a couple of key ones in this note. We have concerns about capacity increases for general traffic in any of the alternatives. We will also continue to push for construction emissions mitigation regardless of the alternative selected.

Technical Committee Attendees

PRESENT	NAME		ORGANIZATION
X	Allen	David	City of Seattle
X	Bannecker	Randy	
	Beaulieu	Peter	Puget Sound Regional Council
	Becklund	Kim	City of Bellevue
X	Bowman	Jennifer	Federal Transit Administration
	Brooks	Allyson	WA Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation
X	Buchanan	Kurt	WA Department of Fish and Wildlife
	Carr	Paul	Puget Sound Clean Air Agency
	Conrad	Richard	City of Mercer Island
X	Cushman	King	Puget Sound Regional Council
X	Dewey	Peter	University of Washington
	Freedman	Jonathan	EPA
X	Godfrey	Dave	City of Kirkland
	Grady	Mike	NOAA Fisheries
X	Jahn	Sheldon	City of Medina
	Kennedy	Steve	Sound Transit
	Kircher	Dave	Puget Sound Clean Air Agency
X	Leonard	Jim	Federal Highway Administration
X	Marpert	Terry	City of Redmond
X	Martin	Ann	King County DOT
X	Nelson	Kitty	NOAA Fisheries
X	Newstrum	Len	Town of Yarrow Point
	Pratt	Austin	US Coast Guard, 13 th District
	Pratt	Cynthia	WA Department of Fish and Wildlife
	Quan	Jennifer	US Fish and Wildlife Service
	Rave-Perkins	Krista	EPA
	Sanchez	Susan	City of Seattle

X	Stenberg	Kathryn	US Army Corps of Engineers
	Suggs	Sarah	WA Department of Ecology
X	Swanson	Terry	WA Department of Ecology
X	Switzer	Jeff	KCJ
	Teachout	Emily	US Fish and Wildlife Service
X	Van de Kamp	Bernard	City of Bellevue
X	Wasserman	Mitch	City of Clyde Hill
	Willis	Joe	Town of Hunts Point

Project Team Attendees

NAME		ORGANIZATION
Chipps	Eric	Sound Transit
Caughey	Courtney	EnviroIssues
Goldenberg	Joy	EnviroIssues
Krueger	Paul	WSDOT
Parker	Lorie	CH2M Hill
Rubstello	Les	WSDOT-UCO
Sullivan	Maureen	WSDOT-UCO
Wornell	Greg	WSDOT-UCO
Yamane	Lindsay	Parametrix

Public Attendees

NAME		ORGANIZATION
Dubman	Jonathan	Montlake
Singer	Natalie	Seattle Times